

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of displaying an intermediate message in a web browser executed on a client computer, comprising the steps of:

identifying an active display window of the web browser;

defining size and dimensions of a message display window encompassing the intermediate message;

identifying an unused display space within the active display window corresponding to the defined size and dimensions of the message display window;

displaying the intermediate message in the message display window if unused display space corresponding to the defined size and dimensions of the message display window is available.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising defining a pattern corresponding to a background pattern of the active display window, and wherein the step of identifying an unused display space within the active display window comprises comparing blocks of pixels within the active display window to the defined background pattern.

3. The method of claim 4 wherein the defined background pattern comprises a predefined red-green-blue (RGB) pixel color pattern.

4. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of monitoring the state of the active display window to determine if there is a change in content of the active display window to produce a new active display window.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of monitoring a period of time that the active display window is active.

6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of:

- identifying an area in the new active display window corresponding to the location of the message display window in the active display window;
- determining if the area in the new active display window is unused; and
- displaying the intermediate message in the area if the active display window is unused, or identifying an alternative unused area within the new active display window if the area is not unused.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the intermediate message is an advertising text message generated and provided to the client computer by a third party content provider coupled to the client computer over a computer network.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing the intermediate message in a memory of the client computer.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the client computer is coupled to a web server computer over the Internet network, and wherein the client computer executes client processes operable to transmit and receive data files over the World Wide Web portion of the Internet, and further wherein the web page data comprises Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) data executable by the client processes.

10. A system for displaying an intermediate message to a plurality comprising:
a server computer hosting a message service;
a plurality of client computers each running browser programs and each having a visual display projecting a graphic user interface of the browser program and an input device which can control at least some functions of the browser programs;
a computer network providing a communication link between the server computer and the plurality of client computers; and
a database in communication with the network for storing intermediate messages;
wherein the client computer executes a process operable to identify empty space in an active display page, re-identify and capture unused space within the active display page when page contents and layout change in response to user commands, and determine varying usable clear area size and boundary for intermediate message display.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the active display page comprises a background pattern consisting of a constant predefined red-green-blue (RGB) pixel color pattern.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the process is further operable to identify an unused display space within the active display window by comparing blocks of pixels within the active display window to the defined background pattern.
13. The system of claim 12 wherein the process is further operable monitor a period of time that the active display window is active.
14. The system of claim 10 wherein the intermediate message is an advertising text message generated and provided to the client computer by a third party content provider coupled to the client computer over the computer network.
15. The system of claim 10 wherein the intermediate message is stored temporarily in a memory of the plurality of client computers.
16. An internet-based system for displaying an intermediate message, comprising:
 - a server computer hosting a message service;
 - a plurality of client computers each running browser programs and each having a visual display projecting a graphic user interface of the browser program and an input device which can control at least some functions of the browser programs;
 - a computer network providing a communication link between the server computer and the plurality of client computers; and
 - a database in communication with the network for storing intermediate messages;

wherein the server computer provides the intermediate message to each of the plurality of client computers and wherein the intermediate message is displayed in an unused area the active display space of the browser programs.

17. The internet-based system of claim 16 wherein the unused area is determined in relation to a pre-defined boundary size of the intermediate message and purposive content displayed in the active area in response to user commands.

18. The internet-based system of claim 17 wherein the unused area is determined by comparing a background pattern of pixels of the active display space to a pre-defined pattern defining clear space within the active display space.

19. The internet-based system of claim 16 wherein the intermediate message is an advertising text message generated and provided to the client computer by a third party content provider coupled to the client computers over the computer network.

20. The internet-based system of claim 16 wherein the intermediate message is stored temporarily in a memory of at least some of the plurality of client computers.